

VZCZCXRO2273
PP RUEHGR
DE RUEHSP #0294 0671545
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 081545Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6517
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3556

UNCLAS PORT OF SPAIN 000294

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR, INL/LP
CARACAS FOR MLO, LEGAT

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [TD](#)
SUBJECT: T&T CARNIVAL GENERALLY FREE FROM CRIME;
KIDNAPPING SUSPECTS ARRESTED WITHIN 24 HOURS

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 00166 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Minister of National Security Martin Joseph noted that Carnival 2006 was relatively crime free, contrary to media speculation. He praised the law enforcement forces for their quick action to resolve the first kidnapping for ransom of the year. The Ministry utilized surveillance equipment and INL-funded canines as part of their Carnival security network, which likely acted as a deterrent. Opposition Political Leader Winston Dookeran criticized Joseph for not acknowledging all the crimes that took place during the festival and announced that the Opposition would focus on a sustained anti-crime effort. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Citing heightened surveillance from helicopters, a blimp and security cameras, Minister of National Security Martin Joseph used a post-cabinet press conference to express his pleasure at the relative lack of crime during Carnival 2006. In spite of the huge influx of tourists and the general sense of permissiveness, the festival proceeded unhindered by significant crime, contrary to much media speculation.

¶3. (U) Joseph also spoke about the successful resolution of the first kidnapping for ransom of 2006, which happened when a funeral home owner and one of his employees were kidnapped late on February 28. The victims were released after approximately 24 hours, upon payment of at least a portion of the TTD 100,000 ransom demanded. Within a few hours of the victims' release, law enforcement agencies arrested four individuals and recovered a portion of the ransom. Joseph commended the forces for their quick action, noting at a press conference that "They should be complimented; we've been castigating them for a while."

¶4. (U) In contrast to Joseph's glowing praise for the law enforcement, and reflecting how politicized the crime issue has become, Opposition Political Leader Winston Dookeran noted that there were a number of crimes during Carnival, including four murders and at least one robbery of a group of British tourists during the festivities. He insisted that Minister Joseph's assessment of the event served to "hoodwink the population" by suggesting that the crime situation had improved. He also indicated that with Carnival over, the United National Congress intended to focus on a sustained effort against crime.

¶5. (SBU) Although lambasted by many of the calypsos performed during Carnival season, the blimp and other surveillance tools likely had a deterrent effect on

crime for the weekend. The Ministry of National Security also independently contracted an American canine trainer/security consultant (here as part of an ongoing INL-funded program), to assist in creating a surveillance grid for the Carnival parade route. The canines undergoing training in the INL program were also utilized for the event as "on the job training."

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what assistance from which country contributed to the success of this year's Carnival, it seems that the entire package has helped. We note with interest that after the FBI's significant assistance in breaking up a criminal ring involved in the kidnap/murder of an American citizen (reftel), there has been only one kidnapping for ransom so far this year. There have been other kidnappings-cum-robberies during the year, however the victim is usually released immediately after being robbed. We are also pleased that the government utilized the INL-trained dogs, and that they took the initiative to use on-the-ground resources to augment its security capabilities. It seems that the security agencies are becoming increasingly professional, and, with time, will be better able to manage public opinion about their efforts, increasing general confidence in law enforcement in the country. END COMMENT.

AUSTIN